

General John Paul McConnell

(1908–1987)

Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force

VITA

Born in Booneville, Arkansas; graduated from U.S. Military Academy (1932); primary and advanced flying school (1932–33); 20th Pursuit Group (1933–37); 50th Observation Squadron (1937–39); squadron and post duties (1939–41); Office of the Chief of Air Forces (1942); chief of staff, Army Air Forces Technical Training Command (1943–43); deputy chief of staff, Headquarters, Army Air Forces Training Command (1943); chief of staff of China-Burma-India Air Force Training Command (provisional), senior air staff officer, Third Tactical Air Force, and deputy commander of Integrated USAAF–RAF Third Tactical Air Force, India (1943–44); Southeast Asia Air Command, assumed command when it was moved from Ceylon to China (1944–46); commanded Air Division Nanking Headquarters Command (1946–47) and chief of Reserve and National Guard Division of the Air Force, (1947–48); chief of Civilian Components Group at Headquarters U.S. Air Force (1948); deputy special assistant to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force Reserve Forces (1948–50); deputy commander of Third Air Division (1950–51); commander, Seventh Air Division (1951–53); director of plans, Strategic Air Command (1953–57); commander, Second Air Force (1957–61); Vice Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command (1961–62); Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command (1962–64); Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force (1964–65); Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force (1965–69); died in Bethesda, Maryland.

Portrait by
Woodi Ishmael.



On a number of occasions in recent years, I shared the disappointment of other military officers over unfavorable decisions on proposals which, after meticulous study and review of alternatives, appeared to be the most effective solutions to specific problems from a military point of view. But, as I indicated earlier, most of our national security problems have significant nonmilitary implications. In such cases, I found that the productive role of the JCS was to identify key factors that were vital from a military standpoint and to provide a number of suitable alternatives for the application of military power. It also was clear that alternatives which fully considered political and economic implications were more likely to be accorded attention in depth, since national authorities could choose the one which best solved the problem as *they saw it*. I believe that one of the more difficult realities for a military officer to accept is the fact that, in a modern governmental environment, a military solution to a problem may not be fully consistent with the broader objectives in the mind of the decisionmaker.

—From “Some Reflections on a Tour of Duty” in
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